Policy Development and Implementation

Key Concepts and Topics

> ➢ Types of public policy
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> ➢ Policy development as a core public health function
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> ➢ The policy development process
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> ➢ Leadership roles in policy development and implementation
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> ➢ Tools for policy development and implementation

Introduction

Laws, rules, and ordinances are examples of public policy. Public policy is often thought of only in terms of legislation, but it is actually multifaceted. "Policy" also refers to the body of information that is developed and applied in regulatory actions, public agency practices, court decisions and rules, private institutional governance, and the formal policy positions of educational, religious, civic, or professional organizations*.*

Types of public policy include:

> ➢ **Statutory**: through the Constitution, Federal and State laws (in Washington State, the Revised Code of Washington, or RCWs);
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> ➢ **Fiscal**: resources are allocated for priority policies (Annual budgets and resolutions)
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> ➢ **Regulatory**: governs practice of individuals in a specific policy area (Administrative rules, in Washington State, the Washington Administrative Code, or WACs)
>
> ➢ **Institutional**: governs agency/institutional staff and consumers (Policy Manuals, Standards)

Public health statutes and authority to develop rules and regulations to promote and protect public health are described in another section of this orientation ("Boards of Health and Legal Authority for Public Health"). In this section, "policy development" involves the means by which problem identification, technical knowledge of possible solutions, and societal values joint to set a course of action" (Institute of Medicine, 1988)

Policy Development as a Core Public Health Function

Setting public policy is a population-based strategy to improve health. Policy development is one of the three core functions of public health, as first described in the 1988 Institute of Medicine report *The Future of Public Health.* This responsibility is defined as "using data gathered through assessment to develop health policy and

recommend programs to carry out those policies". Health policy should result in proposals to support and encourage better health.

A good overview of the process to further define and articulate what public health is and does through the core public health functions, including policy development, is available online at http://www.apha.org/ppp/science/10ES.htm.

The Policy Development Process

The policy development process uses information from many sources including scientific information, information from concerned citizens and providers, concepts of political and organizational feasibility, and community values. It is an open process, involving all public and private sectors by communicating, networking, and building constituencies. Steps in the policy development process include:

- ➢ Define health needs; identify significant health risks and problems and bring people in the community together to solve them
- ➢ Identify existing community assets and resources that can be used in reducing health problems and risks
- ➢ Use data, information and scientific evidence to inform decisions about what needs to be done
- ➢ Develop policies and plans to address the most important health needs by setting goals and measurable objectives
- ➢ Develop alternative strategies for developing plans, and
- ➢ Identify necessary and available resources.

Leadership Roles in Policy Development and Implementation
Public health officials should work to assure effective public health policy development and implementation by:

- ➢ Facilitating community involvement in the policy development process
- ➢ Engaging the community in activities that inform the process
- ➢ Prioritizing, along with the community, public health needs and issues.
- ➢ Conducting strategic planning activities and using strategic planning to align goals, objectives, and strategies with community health priorities
- ➢ Aligning the agency budget with priorities
- ➢ Evaluating program efforts to assure that they are effective in addressing the identified needs
- ➢ Advocating for prevention and protection policies
- ➢ Evaluating and reviewing existing policies on a regular basis to assure they reflect current scientific knowledge and best practices for achieving compliance
- ➢ Enforcing laws and regulations that protect health and ensure safety

Tools for Policy Development and Implementation

Community Health Assessment

The policy development process should begin with the community health assessment. Local health jurisdictions throughout Washington have conducted assessments of community health status. They are being used in a variety of ways to identify and improve the health status of individuals in the community. In many communities, LHJs work with coalitions on different issues, or with advisory groups to analyze the results of assessments, to determine some of the causal factors for the issue, and to plan for community activation to address the problem. Public health and community leaders can use various tools and methods to increase the effectiveness of their policy development and implementation processes. A few of these methods are described below and referenced in greater detail in the Learning Resource Toolkit.

Strategic Planning

Strategic planning can be used to align an agency's goals, objectives strategies and resources with community needs and priorities identified through the community health assessment process. Several models for community-wide strategic planning are described below and in the Learning Resource Toolkit. The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) Strategic Plan provides an example of an agency strategic plan (The DOH strategic plan is available online at www.doh.wa.gov/strategic/StratPlan05_07_ed2.pdf)

Program Planning and Evaluation

A goal of program planning is to design programs that effectively address the needs or problems identified by the agency and community. A goal of program evaluation is to assure that program strategies are effectively addressing the identified needs. The Learning Resource Toolkit includes resources for program planning and evaluation.

Standards for Public Health in Washington State
http://www.doh.wa.gov/Standards/default.htm

The Standards for Public Health in Washington State are a performance measurement system of standards and measures developed by committees of public health practitioners. They include five key areas of public health practice and, for each standard, a set of measures is provided for local and state agencies. Policy development and implementation is addressed throughout the Standards for Public Health in Washington State.

Exemplary Practices Electronic Compendium
(http://www.doh.wa.gov/PHIP/Standards/BestPractices/KeyManagementPractices/KeyManagementPractices.htm)

The Exemplary Practices Compendium for the Standards provides examples of ways DOH and LHJs meet the Standards measures and meet the criteria developed for "exemplary practices". Accessing the exemplary practices by "key management practices" organizes the examples into categories that are pertinent to policy development and implementation. The key management practices include:

- Public Information
- Community and stakeholder involvement
- Governance
- Policies, Procedures and Protocols
- Plans, Goals and Evaluation
- Key Indicators,
- Quality Improvement

Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnership (MAPP) -
http://mapp.naccho.org/MAPP_Home.asp

MAPP is a community-wide strategic planning tool, developed by NACCHO and CDC, for improving community health. Facilitated by public health leadership, this tool helps communities prioritize public health issues and identify resources for addressing them. The process includes four strategic assessments undertaken by the local community: 1) community themes, 2) a local public health system assessment, 3) a community health status assessment, and 4) an evaluation of the forces of change. Because the community's strengths, needs, and desires drive the process, MAPP provides the framework for creating a truly community-driven initiative.

Protocol for Assessing Community Excellence in Environmental Health (PACE EH) - http://www.naccho.org/GENERAL261.cfm

PACE EH is also a tool developed by NACCHO to help local communities and health departments conduct a community-based environmental health assessment and create an accurate and verifiable profile of the community's environmental health status. The methodology takes the user through a series of steps to engage the public, collect necessary and relevant information pertaining to community concerns, rank issues, and set local priorities of action. At the heart are three core processes: developing new relationships with community stakeholders, expanding the understanding of the relationship between human health and the state of the environment, and redefining the leadership role for public health officials.

Turning Point Project -
http://www.turningpointprogram.org/Pages/publications.html

This national project based at the University of Washington has developed a process for establishing and implementing performance measures for public health. The *Turning Point Guidebook for Performance Measurement* defines various types of measures and presents tools and methods for planning and implementing performance measurement. The steps in the process include incorporating stakeholder input, promoting top leadership support, creating a mission, long-term goals, goals, and objectives; formulating short-term goals, devising a simple, manageable approach, and providing technical assistance. The guidebook describing the process in detail is referenced in the accompanying orientation toolkit.